

MEXICAN WOLF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT WORK GROUP
Summary Notes for Meeting of January 27, 2006

Location: Silver City NM, Western New Mexico University, in the Global Resource Center ABC Room, 1000 West College Avenue (12th and Kentucky)
Time: NM time: 12 pm (Noon) – 4 pm on January 27
Host: Arizona Game and Fish Department
Participants: AMOC Lead Agencies: AGFD – Terry B. Johnson (Chair), Bill Van Pelt, Sharon Hansen, Shawn Farry; NMDGF – Chuck Hayes, Saleen Richter; USDA APHIS WS – Alan May; USDA FS – Wally Murphy; USFWS –John Morgart, and John Oakleaf.

January 27 – 1200-1600

A. Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, and Agenda Review

Terry Johnson called the meeting to order at 1600 local time. After a brief welcome and introductions, the agenda was followed. Mr. Johnson announced that no decisions have been made regarding release of wolves in 2006. He also provided the most recent estimate of Project costs to date; this information is updated twice a year.

B. 2005 End-of-Year Count

SOP 0.D Moratorium was referenced. Shawn Farry provided overall population information. Population verification is done through direct observation, aerial flights, ground-tracking and howling techniques. The IFT estimated a population range of 35-49 for 2005, with a minimum of 35 directly observed. In terms of breeding pairs, John Oakleaf defined what a breeding pair consists of and announced that the end-of-year breeding pairs equaled 5 (2 in New Mexico and 3 in Arizona). The 2004 final count was 44-48 wolves, and the 2003 count was 50-60. 28 – 32 pups were seen in 2005, but most were not confirmed to have survived.

C. Moratorium

Last year, AMOC proposed that if a goal of six breeding pairs was met for 2005, new wolf releases might not be necessary in 2006. Given that the count was 5 breeding pairs, AMOC is gathering data to determine what releases, if any, need to occur in Arizona and New Mexico. No decisions have been made to release wolves in 2006 as naïve packs. Several wolves were taken out of the wild last year and remain in captivity at this time; these animals are now eligible for translocation, which can occur (per the moratorium) anywhere within the recovery zone boundaries in Arizona or New Mexico. AMOC will have specifics for possible new releases and translocations identified later this year. Under the moratorium, AMOC can also release wolves for management purposes, for example to inject desired genetics into the wild population or to replace a wolf that was removed. The IFT will submit its recommendations on these issues to AMOC over the next month. AMOC will consider that information before deciding whether to approve any new releases or translocations.

- D. Possible Translocations in AZ/NM and Initial Releases in AZ: scoping discussion for specific sites that might be used in 2006 (e.g. Apache and Gila National Forests)

USFS AMOC representative Wally Murphy encouraged public participation in a scoping process for six sites in New Mexico. When there is proposed ground disturbing activity, the USFS assesses it through a categorical exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, or an Environmental Impact Statement, depending on the potential impact. Wally asked attendees to submit written comments during today's meeting, or within 2 weeks to Mr. Art Telles (Gila National Forest). USFS is scoping the environmental effects on the six potential sites in Gila, including issues such as feeding wolves, soft mesh pens, travel to/from the site (i.e. site use). USFS is not scoping release of wolves.

Nick Smith, NMDGF, went through a description of the six proposed sites: Seco has been used by wolves in the past; it's next to the Ladder Ranch, which has a resident herd of elk and deer, and an agreement exists with USFWS to allow wolves on the Ranch. Mion, north of Black Canyon, has been the hard release site of two wolves in the past. This site has a reasonable year-round elk population, and the Aspen wolf pack is in the area. There is no permittee on this allotment. Myson Park, is on a vacant allotment, and has reasonable prey base. Gila Park is on the Sapio allotment and is currently being grazed through an agreement with The Nature Conservancy. The south side of Black Mountain is currently under non-use. On the west fork of the Gila, there are no grazing allotments, and there has been a high density of elk in recent summer months.

Chuck Hayes, NMDGF, reviewed possible translocation of groups of wolves. For clarity, it was pointed out that this is a different issue (wolves) from what the USFS was discussing (sites). AMOC has two wolf pairs in captivity that have a high probability for translocation. There are also three separate wolves, and three pups from Francisco pack that were removed in 2005. The female pups that were not involved with depredation would be coupled with an individual male. The wolves might form a pair bond and be released before whelping at a pre-approved site. The second pair of wolves was removed from the San Carlos Apache Reservation for boundary issues, not for depredation; both wolves have wild experience. These wolves could be released at any of the six sites, preferably at North Seco, to avoid overlap with existing wolves. Over the next 30 days, the IFT will look at all translocation possibilities and make recommendations to AMOC. There are also two male Francisco pups that are not part of a proposal at this time, but the IFT will consider them as well.

- E. 5-Year Review Outcomes and Implementation Actions

The Review was completed in December 2005. There are hardcopies and CDs available.

The 5-Year Review considered all relevant information, including the 1999 technical review and the 2001 3-Year Review. Responses to all public comments have been included in the final document. Recommendations 1-14 largely pertain to issues that USFWS must address. Recommendations 15-37 pertain to activities that are already within the purview of AMOC, per the Memorandum of Understanding under which AMOC operates.

AMOC anticipates a USFWS response to the recommendations soon. USFWS can accept, reject, or modify the AMOC recommendations. An *Endangered Species Update* will be sent out as soon as a USFWS response is received.

Terry Johnson made available hardcopies and CDs of the 5-Year Review and encouraged attendees to sign up for the Project's self-subscription newsletter. He also provided the following information:

Information on the 5-Year Review, Standard Operating Procedures, and Proposed Moratorium is available at <http://azgfd.gov/wolf> and <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov>.

Information on Adaptive Management Work Group meetings and other issues pertaining to the Blue Range Reintroduction Project is disseminated electronically through a self-subscription newsletter. Please access the subscription form at: <http://azgfd.gov/signup>.

E-mail correspondence pertaining to Blue Range Reintroduction Project issues should be sent to mexwolf@azgfd.gov. This is a passive email account; information submitted to it will be read and used within the Reintroduction Project, but individual responses will not be sent.

F. General Discussion and Other Business

None.

G. Schedule and Locations of 2006 AMWG Meetings

April 21, 2006, Pinetop, AZ, 1:30 – 5pm

July 21, 2006, Reserve, NM, 1:30 – 5pm

August Workshop 29 – 31, 2006 with Hon-Dah, hotel rooms held for 28, 29 and 30th.

October 20, 2006, Morenci, AZ, 1:30 – 5pm

4:00 pm The meeting was adjourned